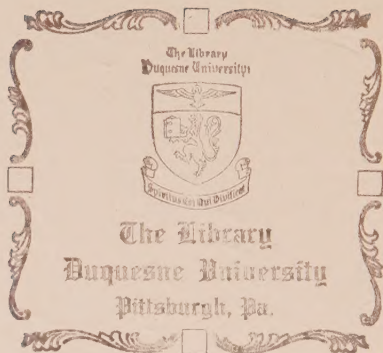


The Content of the Advanced Religion Course

—By John M. Cooper, D.D.



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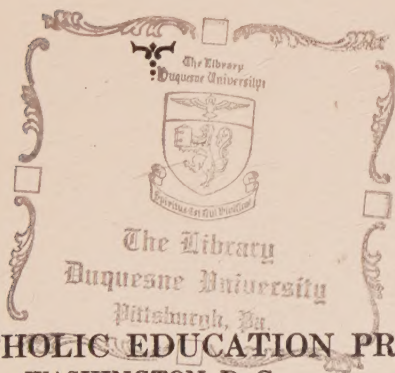
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THE CONTENT OF THE ADVANCED RELIGION COURSE

By

JOHN M. COOPER, D.D.

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA



THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION PRESS
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PREFACE

The five chapters which make up the present volume were published originally in the *Catholic Educational Review* in 1923. The writer desires to express to the Editors of *The Review* his grateful acknowledgment of their courtesy in permitting the reprint in book form

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THE MORAL CONTENT

"Do you know of any satisfactory textbook for high school and college classes in religion?" For many years the writer has plied with this question his friends and confrères engaged in the field. He has yet to receive in reply an unqualified affirmative.

Our current textbooks have excellences as manifest as they are manifold. Witness, for instance, their limpid clearness, their orderly arrangement, their unhesitating directness. He who runs may read, and reading may know without fail whereon the Catholic Church takes its changeless stand. Our textbooks have done and are doing yeoman service. Where, however, there is question of the divinely revealed pearl of great price, we the jewelers who are charged to design its setting should be untrue to our God-given trust were we ever to rest quite satisfied with our clumsy human handicraft.

This chapter and the ones to follow deal with the moral, dogmatic, historical, apologetic, and ascetic content of the advanced religion course. They barely touch upon methods. Nor are they a systematic treatment even of content. They embody some scattered suggestions regarding certain minor modifications in our texts that seem desirable. These suggestions are the outgrowth of numerous informal conferences with other teachers working actively in the field and of the writer's personal experience and experimentation during thirteen years with college classes in religion and the same number of years with high school religion classes. The present chapter deals with the moral or ethical content of the advanced religion course.

The moral sections of the handbooks of advanced religion in more common use closely resemble the technical manuals of moral theology used as textbooks in our ecclesiastical seminaries. No one familiar with both the handbooks and the manuals can fail to be struck by the obvious similarity between the two in viewpoint, order, spirit, terminology, and general manner of presentation. The handbooks are shorter and more compact and omit many details treated fully in the manuals, but in the main the former are modeled faithfully upon the latter and are taken almost verbally out of them. The handbooks are boiled-down technical theology. They are reduced and slightly retouched photos, or, shall we say, vest-pocket editions, of the manuals. They are the technical manuals looked at through the wrong end of a telescope.

Now, the manuals of moral theology have grown out of a very specific practical need. Unlike our devotional and ascetic literature, such as, for example, the "Imitation of Christ," they have not been written for the direct moral education or personal edification of the reader, be he priest, seminarian, or layman. They have, as Lehmkuhl expresses it, "the eminently practical scope of instructing and forming spiritual directors and confessors." Their history, no less than their form and content, is unmistakable evidence that this sharply delimited practical aim has gardenened and Burbanked their growth. They discuss objectively the field of Christian rights and duties and point out such moral pedagogical technique as may be applied to the individual penitent or spiritual consultant. Historically they trace their ancestry, in one line at least, to the medieval penitential books. Taken by and large, the technical manuals, when

studied in conjunction with pastoral and ascetic theology, admirably fulfil their mission of equipping confessors and spiritual advisers.

Is, however, this mission the aim of our advanced moral education? Ninety-five to ninety-nine per cent of the student body in Catholic high schools and colleges for boys and one hundred per cent in those for girls will never become confessors or sacerdotal spiritual advisers. They will live their span of life as laymen and lay women in the world. Obviously our moral education and moral textbooks should aim at equipping them, not for hearing confessions, but for living in the world.

To be more precise, our primary aim in Catholic moral education should be to turn out, not merely graduates who are well-instructed in the Catholic moral ideal, but graduates who are living the Catholic ideal in their daily lives. Instruction about that ideal is a part but a part only of moral education. From the instructional standpoint, we must aim at developing in our students the habit of informed, intelligent and loyal moral judgment as a means of helping them to apply the Catholic standard to their conduct in life, first of all here and now during their school days, and secondly by anticipation to the concrete problems and situations of after-life. From the volitional standpoint, we must aim at getting our students to live out their Catholic ideal of conduct, first of all here and now while at school, and secondly to develop in their lives those habits and personal standards that will carry over into the broader arena and newer situations of adulthood. The foregoing aim is shared in common by both elementary and advanced moral education. So far as the latter is con-

cerned, should we not expect from the privileged minority who pass through our Catholic high schools and colleges, the minority whose lives will be scrutinized by friend and foe more searchingly and under a whiter light, the minority to whom will fall the greater share of leadership—should we not expect from them a higher standard of moral judgment and of moral living than from the majority who have lacked the privilege of higher Catholic education?

As is apparent, therefore, the specific aims of moral theology and of advanced moral education differ radically. While, of course, the respective textbooks must contain the same fundamental Catholic truths and principles, we should naturally expect, in view of this primary difference of aim, great differences both in content and in manner of presentation and development thereof.

1. Moral theology lays particular, albeit of course not exclusive, emphasis on sins. It goes to great pains to enumerate, define, classify, and sub-divide them, as well as to weigh their respective gravity. The reason is obvious enough. When we go to confession, we go, not to trumpet forth our virtues, but to confess our shortcomings. If then the priestly physician of the soul would cure his patients, he must specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of the soul's diseases.

The moral theologian, writing for the needs of the confessor, will therefore distinguish, for instance, and define scientifically the several kinds of blasphemy: direct and indirect, mediate and immediate, heretical, imprecatory, and contumelious. A sacerdotal physician of souls may on a rare occasion—once in five or ten years perhaps, if that often—have need to know these distinc-

tions or at least to know that these distinctions exist. But should we require a knowledge of such distinctions and definitions from immature adolescents?

Again, to give another illustration, manuals of moral theology often treat the eighth commandment by tabulating, defining and discussing the following ways in which it may be violated: by perjury, by lying, by detraction, by contumely, and by rash judgment. Besides distinguishing between rash judgment and rash suspicion, they divide lying into malicious, officious, and jocose; contumely or insult into positive and negative; and detraction into simple and calumnious, direct and indirect. How many of these distinctions do you yourself know and how many could you define offhand? What, for instance, is the difference between a positive and a negative insult, or between direct and indirect detraction? How many of the above distinctions need the conscientious and educated Catholic layman know?

For the sake of clearness, certain sins and their kinds may and must be treated in an advanced religion course. But, in view of the primary aim of religion handbooks as distinguished from the aim of manuals of moral theology, is it necessary to tabulate, define, and subdivide in the pages of the former all the fifty-seven varieties of sins under each chapter heading or under each commandment?

Moreover, is it good pedagogy to lay the major stress on sins? Should not the virtues, presented in all their rainbow loveliness, be focal? Have not the latter a stronger dynamic appeal? With apologies to the cohorts who gallantly maintain the *Allmacht* of instinct-drives, may we not still believe that there is a certain ideomotor trend in all of us that makes the repeated harp-

ing on the darker side of moral life a suggestion and occasion of sin in itself? Then too, does not such a question as "How may we break the Fourth Commandment?" constitute something akin to a subtle challenge to the red streak of self-assertiveness—some would call it bolshevism or just cussedness—that normally companions middle adolescence?

Instead of giving gratuitous advertising to the numerous brands of Satan's products, would it not be better to use the pages of our moral textbooks as advertising space for the lofty and soul-stirring positive moral ideals of Our Divine Exemplar? Instead of dividing and subdividing blasphemy, would it not be better to present to our students the divine witchery of reverence and loyalty to God Our Father? Instead of focussing attention on our all too manifold opportunities of breaking the eighth commandment, would it not be better to stress and stimulate thereunder truthfulness and the sense of honor, trustworthiness and honesty, kindness and fair play in thought and word, consideration for others' feelings and leniency in interpreting others' acts and motives? Shall our instruction in moral hygiene and health be confined to the microscopic examination of nocuous moral bacilli?

Shall not, in a word, the Catholic moral pedagogical principle be: Select for textbook and class treatment the great leading virtues under each heading or commandment; neglect the minutiae; concentrate by instruction and every pedagogical device upon building up in the lives of our adolescent charges the key habits that combine to make the ideal practical Catholic layman and laywoman. What was Our Lord's method and principle, even in dealing as He was with adults, and not with adolescents?

2. A confessor is both physician of souls and judge of consciences. The confessional is both a sickroom and a tribunal. As judge, the confessor must temper justice with mercy, he must give the penitent the benefit of a doubt, and he may strictly demand only the moral minimum. As physician, his treatment is curative and he must often be content with half a cure in lieu of complete restoration of his penitent's health of soul. Moral theology therefore tends to stress the curative more than the preventive and constructive phases of moral education, and devotes a good many of its pages to the determination of the moral minimum of strict obligation, leaving often to other theological sciences and disciplines the task of hortatory insistence on the moral maximum.

Charity as distinguished from justice lends itself less readily to strict juristic treatment. It looms large in our Catholic hortatory literature, but is given very brief discussion in our technical moral theologies. That our religion handbooks modeled on technical moral manuals treat so cavalierly the field of charity and the works of mercy is perhaps due to this cause. Charity and the works of mercy have all but disappeared from our elementary and advanced religion textbooks. Yet charity as ordinarily distinguished from justice constitutes probably a full fifty per cent of the Christian moral code. Our Saviour makes its practice or omission the final test of our classification at the Last Judgment among the sheep or the goats. Open the gospel at any page at random, and in four cases out of five your eye will alight on a passage describing charity and the works of mercy being practiced or enjoined by Our Divine Exemplar and Teacher.

As justice and the last seven commandments cover the

sphere of our neighbor's rights, so charity and the works of mercy cover the sphere of our neighbor's needs. His rights concern his welfare little if at all more deeply than do his needs.

Would it not therefore be in better accordance with Our Lord's example and teaching as well as with the cardinal emphasis in Catholic morality on love of neighbor, to devote as much or nearly as much space in our handbooks of advanced religion to the treatment of charity and the works of mercy as we devote to the treatment of justice and the last seven commandments?

First of all, should we not stress the opportunities of charity in daily life, and stress them as opportunities as well as obligations. Theoretically and juristically, charity is certainly obligatory—although the writer has more than once verified among groups of otherwise intelligent and well instructed advanced students the ingrown uncatholic concept that charity and the works of mercy are optional for the individual lay Catholic or that they are works of supererogation or merely means of accumulating merit or of satisfying for the temporal punishment due to sin. Stressing them solely as strict obligations may sometimes defeat our purpose. Charity obliges under limitations, viz., in proportion to our neighbor's need and to our ability to help out. In fact, pinning down the obligation of charity on John Smith in this or that concrete situation and circumstance is in practice a slippery task. Ten chances to one, if John is reluctant and has a normal IQ and fair nimbleness of wit, he can find half a dozen perfectly good loopholes through which he can escape from the bondage of strict moral obligation. In educating our students in charity, would it not then be best, while definitely making clear its obligatoriness, to present it less under its juristic aspects?

Furthermore, we need to expand very much many current conceptions of charity and the works of mercy. In the typical Catholic centuries, the Middle Ages, the Church interpreted the works of mercy very inclusively and granted indulgences, not only for aid and resources given to the building of churches, hospitals, charitable institutions, and schools, but also for works promoting wider public welfare such as building roads and bridges, dams and harbors, such as active membership in trade guilds and marksmen's clubs—the medieval prototypes respectively of our modern labor unions and national militia—and such as founding non-usurious money-loan—our modern degenerated pawnshop. Read the details in that delightful little work of Nikolaus Paulus recently translated by Father Elliot Ross, "Indulgences as a Social Factor in the Middle Ages."

Interpreted thus in the traditional inclusive Catholic sense, "visiting the sick," for instance, to-day includes a host of activities ranging from a simple visit to a sick friend to the bacteriological researches of a Pasteur, from the conduct of a hospital to the life-saving task of providing a typhoid-ridden city with a pure water and milk supply. If we interpret charity in its historic Catholic sense, we shall find it expanding over enormous fields of activity that we are accustomed to ticket as vocational, educational, sanitary, industrial, social, or civic, and therefore merely secular. Interpret charity to the Catholic student as our holy mother the Church has historically interpreted it, and our religion becomes more and more what it was intended to be, a seven-day-a-week and twenty-four-hour-a-day affair. Nothing that concerns human needs and welfare is foreign to its pur-

pose, provided only that God be not left out of our reckoning and that what we do be done "in His name."

Charity has a still more intimate and personal aspect. Charity being synonymous with generosity, kindness, helpfulness, and the spirit of the good turn and the helping hand, the everyday life of the layman or laywoman in the world bristles with opportunities, not sporadic but daily and hourly, for the exercise of charity. Humdrum work-a-day life at play and at work, at home and abroad, in the office, the store, and the factory, becomes a tissue woven of countless opportunities for generously and charitably sharing with others what we may have in abundance, be it abundance of this world's goods or be it abundance of leisure, skill, intelligence, experience, good sense, good humor, or God's grace. Would it not be well to find place in our advanced religion textbooks for calling the attention of our students to the wood in the trees, to the opportunities that fairly jump at them in their daily activities and contacts as playfellows, workfellows, friends, and home members, and as future parents, workers, and citizens?

Charity finally should be treated in its vocational aspects. Practically all honest labor fulfills some human need. Some professions do so more obviously. Such are the medical and nursing professions with their aim of "visiting the sick," that is of curing or preventing illness, and of staying the hand of death. Such is again the legal profession with its function of maintaining justice between man and man. And so one could run through the professions and vocations, scamping not even the humbler tasks of the hewer of wood and the drawer of water. All after their respective kinds and manners do neighborly service as their life-task. Of course a vicious

and selfish intention can dethrone from the plane of charity any vocation, but so too can a vicious and selfish intention dethrone from the plane of charity even the most literal and manifest work of mercy. The very cup of cold water given is not a work of mercy unless done unselfishly, in the spirit of charity, "in His name."

In the foregoing paragraphs we have not been spinning gossamer theories or speaking by the book. The writer's colleagues and he have tried the plan experimentally and can vouch that it "gets across."

3. Moral theology manuals devote the major part of their attention to the objective scientific determination of the Christian norms of conduct. The manuals shed light, and an abundance of it. They do not radiate heat. Their treatment of Catholic morality is mainly a cold intellectualistic one. They are not written for the purpose of stirring into action those forces within the student or reader that inspire him to live up to these norms. This latter task is committed by the moral theologian into the hands of his co-workers, the devotional and ascetic writers and preachers. A perusal of the moral manuals and of the handbooks modeled upon them makes evident at first blush the contrast they offer with, say, the Sermon on the Mount, or with the average mission sermon or Sunday morning sermon on a moral topic, or with the "Imitation of Christ."

If our aim in moral education is to get our students to live the Catholic ideal as well as to know it, should our moral instruction be coldly didactic and intellectualistic? Should it not also be an appeal to the heart, to the affective and volitional forces, the dynamic driving forces that mould youth and age? Why need we be in a perpetual fidget lest we be caught in the act

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of "preaching" to our students? Is there no *via media* between "preachiness" and aloof didacticism?

It will be said, of course, that our teachers do awaken and train the will in their elaboration of the text. Our qualified teachers do, but they do so either because they are so much closer to their boys and girls than have seemingly been the compilers of our textbooks in advanced religion or because they are so much farther removed from the deflecting influence of the highly specialized moral theology manuals. But granted that our qualified teachers do, why should we handicap them as we are doing by textbooks of such arctic temperature? And how can we expect our boys and girls to warm their hearts and hands over such icy pages?

4. Theology is a broad field. Specialization has been found necessary. One result of this has been the separation for purposes of intensive intellectual treatment of moral theology from dogmatic and sacramental theology. Our religion handbooks have followed suit, and no one would question the necessity therein for orderly exposition.

But, is it not poor moral pedagogy to define moral standards without at the same time reinforcing the motives—supernatural and natural, rational, instinctive, and emotional—that will help to get the moral standards realized in the actual lives of the students? Such motives are at hand in the flaming example of Christ and of the saints and in the great dogmas that are the mainspring of Catholic motivation. The means for buttressing the motives are at hand in prayer, devotions, and the sacramental system. Is it good pedagogy to treat all of moral instruction one year or one semester, and then wait until next year or next semester before

stimulating the motive forces and suggesting the supernatural means for getting the moral ideal reduced to concrete practice? Does not our teaching then run the risk of being instruction about the Catholic moral ideal instead of education in it?

Orderly treatment is necessary. We make no plea for chaos. But would it not be well quietly and, so to speak, marginally to interweave into every section of our moral instruction and our moral texts, suggestions of the inspiring example of Christ and the saints, cross-references as it were to the pertinent motivating dogmas, practical hints of the help to be obtained through prayer and the sacraments? Is not this what we do in our moral sermons, except perhaps in some of those courses of moral sermon-instructions which have recently developed out of our catechesis?

5. Moral theology manuals are commonly written in Latin and usually have a more or less cosmopolitan outlook. The same manual may be used as a textbook in French, Italian, and American seminaries. The writers consequently have in mind more generally prevalent conditions. Local or national conditions to which our general moral principles and precepts must be applied are not taken so explicitly into account.

If, however, our advanced religion handbooks are for the use of American boys and girls, should not special attention be devoted therein to contemporary American conditions, problems, and applications? When a course in American life and conditions and movements—call it community civics or whatever we please—gets genuine and full recognition in our high school and college curriculum, the trail of the instructor in higher religion classes will be appreciably less steep and thorny. If

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his students have not acquired a deeper and truer knowledge of the swirling currents around them than they can glean from the headlines and sporting sheets of the daily newspaper, the religion instructor must stop over and over again to explain to them many things of vital concern to Catholic morality that they should already have learned in an elementary course in the social sciences. Very intelligent college students, for instance, often stare in skeptic wonder when told that our American infant mortality and industrial accident rate is nearly twice what it should be and much higher than among many other civilized peoples to-day. Simple and relatively inexpensive preventive measures would cut down this rate from one-half to one-third. Is there not therefore a moral obligation to take these measures?

Numberless similar conditions involving an unmistakable individual and collective moral responsibility will readily occur to any one familiar with our American economic, industrial, social, civic, domestic, hygienic, recreational, and kindred conditions. Many of these conditions are treated in recent textbooks of social or community civics and are being studied exhaustively in numerous monographs and surveys that are easily accessible in our libraries. Might not the students in advanced religion be given the task of making an investigation from published surveys, from inquiry among experts, and from personal observation, of some at least of the conditions in their own community? The writer is intimately acquainted with one such project carried out in a Catholic high school last year.

At any rate, should not the adolescent citizens who sit at our feet in the religion classes of our high schools and colleges be trained to a sense of their collective

duties, and be trained to apply intelligently and conscientiously to actual conditions at their own front doors the great Catholic moral principles and ideals? And should not our handbooks of advanced religion contain a great number of such specific moral applications?

As embodying provisionally the suggestions tentatively and hesitatingly offered in the preceding pages, the following outline for the moral section of the advanced religion course, an outline which his colleagues and he have tried out experimentally, is submitted for discussion, criticism, and correction:

a. Love of God and neighbor as the essence of the Catholic ideal of conduct; the affective, volitional, and motor elements common to both natural and supernatural love.

b. Love God, that is "Treat Him as your Father"; hence, be reverent and loyal to Him, worship Him, obey Him, observe Sundays, holy days, days of fast and abstinence.

c. Love your neighbor, that is, "Do to him as you would have him do to you"; hence fulfil his needs and respect his rights.

d. Our neighbor's needs, charity and the works of mercy, "The strong shall help the weak," or "Those who have shall share."

e. The works of mercy in detail; expand their concept in the historic traditional Catholic sense and as carried on under our contemporary American conditions; emphasize their focal importance and obligatoriness in the Catholic ideal, and bring out not merely their social but also their personal and vocational aspects. (One-third or at least one-quarter of whole moral course to be devoted to works of mercy.)

f. Our neighbor's rights, justice, the last seven commandments, "To every man his rights."

g. The commandments in detail; explain them in their individual and collective interpretation as applied to

contemporary American conditions and problems especially; emphasize how each commandment protects some human right and makes for human welfare—for domestic, economic, social, civic, or international well-being, and for health and the sacredness of human life. (One-third to one-half of moral course to be devoted to commandments.)

h. General résumé and deductions.

The positive aspect of the moral law is emphasized throughout, as appears from the foregoing outline. For a more detailed example, see section 1 in the preceding pages. Interwoven into every section and sub-section, should appear the sublime figure of Christ in His words and examples, as well as frequent references to the motivating dogmas and to the devotional and sacramental means of obtaining God's grace to live up to the moral ideal, and hints on the technique of habit-formation.

Certain leit motifs are recurrently suggested throughout the course and are brought to express consciousness in the final few lessons (section *h*). Such underlying ideas should include at least the following:

a. Service is not something gummed on to morality; all moral living serves our neighbor's welfare by fulfilling his needs or by protecting his rights.

b. The divine moral law is not arbitrary; God loves us; hence, He desires the well-being of His children both here and hereafter; hence, his moral law, while imposing a burden upon us, is nonetheless a signal token of His concern for and interest in our welfare on this earth as well as in eternity.

c. The moral law, while in a real sense limiting our freedom, in the long run makes for both our freedom and our welfare, by protecting my rights and freedom against infringement by my neighbor, and vice versa; it is a fifty-fifty plan, with no playing of favorites.

d. God created us with free will, unlike the sub-human creation; our loyalty to God's interests and to our neighbor's is a trusteeship.

e. Our Father in Heaven neither crushes or spoils us; he trains us, he helps us, he entrusts us with responsibility; life is a divinely planned "project" in educating us, and thus in building up the three-fold aspect of the Kingdom of God,—in our hearts, in the world, and in the world to come.

THE DOGMATIC CONTENT

Dogmas, like the human mind, may be studied in their static and structural aspects or in their dynamic and functional aspects. We may have a functional theology as we have a functional psychology. We may ask what dogmas *are*, or we may ask what dogmas *do*.

The advocates of creedless religion answer the latter question with a sweeping negative. Dogmas, they say, do nothing; they are fifth wheels, if not indeed drags. Live your life according to high moral standards, our emancipated brethren admonish us, and it does not matter what you believe or whether you believe anything at all.

As Catholics, we beg to differ. Moreover, our Catholic answer to the question, What do dogmas do?, has an intimate bearing upon the answer to the further question, What should be the dogmatic content of an advanced religion course? For if the aim of Catholic religious education is to get our students to live the Catholic ideal of love of God and neighbor, the determination of what their dogmatic faith contributes to such moulding of their lives becomes a matter of primary concern.

Using, then, the words "dogma" and "dogmatic truth" to include both worship in the sense of grace, prayer, and the sacraments as well as dogma in its more restricted sense, let us inquire, What do dogmas do?

Why has God revealed to us certain supernatural truths? Are such revealed truths simply divinely set tests of our intellectual humility? Are they anticipatory illuminations of the intellect lighting the way for the

fuller illumination that is to come when we shall see God face to face and no longer as in a glass darkly? Are they affectionate self-revelations from God, vouchsafed to us on the principle that we "reveal" ourselves to those whom we love? The discussion of these questions would carry us far afield into speculative theology.

We may instead simplify our educational task by confining our quest to the less ambitious and more tangible question: What do dogmas do in helping us to live our Catholic lives, in helping us towards the goal of being perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect? What, so to speak, is their religious educational function? On the answer to this question hinges the determination of the dogmatic content of religious educational instruction.

So far as dogmas relating to grace, prayer, and the sacraments are concerned, their function is quite obvious. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, and these dogmas tell us how to go about getting from the Author of all good things that tonic of the soul which we call grace, that assistance from on high which strengthens the spirit against the weakness of the flesh and helps us live up to our Catholic moral ideal.

As regards dogmas understood in their more restricted sense, the answer does not lie so close to the surface. We shall therefore, in approaching the question, choose for analysis and study some concrete examples.

"The world," wrote Lecky, "is governed by its ideals, and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound and, on the whole, a more salutary influence than the mediaeval conception of the Blessed Virgin. . . . No longer the slave or toy of man, no longer associated only with ideas of degradation and

sensuality, woman rose, in the person of the Virgin Mother, into a new sphere. . . ." This age-long historical and educational influence exercised upon the lives of countless Catholic multitudes by the ideal of the Virgin Mother of Christ has been exercised by reason of the accumulating dogmas that have built up and enriched that ideal. These dogmas are those of Mary's divine motherhood, of her Immaculate Conception, of her sinlessness, of her virgin maternity, of her perpetual virginity, and of her freedom from even the bodily corruption of the grave. Her divine Son showered upon His Mother privilege upon privilege, purity upon purity, and out of the resulting wealth of dogmas, heaped, so to speak, one upon another, has grown the star-white and radiant ideal of Mary's virginal chastity and maternal loveliness. By what process has this ideal become the dynamic uplifting force that it has been?

Do you think that the average lay Catholic can define clearly each of these various doctrines and dogmas concerning the Blessed Virgin? In 1918, and again in 1920, the writer's colleagues and he gave a surprise test of elementary catechism questions to unselected groups of Catholic college students, 436 students in all. These groups would probably represent a fair cross-section of the general Catholic population. Among the questions was, What is the Immaculate Conception? Of the 436 students, 264 or 60.5 per cent answered correctly, 19 or 4.3 per cent hazily, and 153 or 35.1 per cent quite incorrectly. Yet all these students had, as has the average Catholic, a very clear vision and impression of the radiant purity of Mary, a vision and impression that serves in their lives as an inspiring and dynamic ideal. The energizing ideal remains as an abiding after-image

or after-impression, even though the perhaps once known and memorized definitions of the various Marian dogmas have suffered more than a sea-change. Some of the scaffolding has fallen, but the temple walls remain.

In other ways, too, has the devotion to Mary, founded upon dogma, influenced and educated our Catholic lives. Devotion to Mary has enabled religion to utilize and capitalize and, shall we say, sublimate towards a supernatural purpose and activity the natural filial-to-mother sentiment and the normal reverence for motherhood that are common to humankind the world over and that are such potent influences upon better and higher living. Devotion to her has also enabled religion to capitalize and build upon the natural deep-seated respect for pure womanhood that is hidden in the heart of even the profligate and the degenerate. Devotion to her has, moreover, energized our imitative tendencies.

Let us analyze another dogma, that of the Incarnation. The feast of the Incarnation, March 25, is passed over each year almost unnoticed so far as the great mass of Catholics is concerned, and even in the official liturgy of the Church it ranks below the feast of Christmas. Yet from the purely dogmatic standpoint, the Incarnation is immeasurably more important than the Nativity. But the Incarnation has no great human appeal, while the Nativity has. The birth of the helpless divine Infant touches off and activates the powerful parental and protective impulses within us, and through them draws us closer to Christ. Had the Son of God come on earth in full adulthood, the Incarnation would still have been a strong religious motive for conduct, a motive that would have had a predominantly rational pull, a motive that could be formulated about as fol-

lows: If God so loves me as to become man for me, I should love Him in return. But, coming as Our Savior did as a helpless infant, the Incarnation and Birth give not only a rational appeal but also an affective, instinctive appeal, a tug at the very heart-strings of humanity.

Here, then, in the Incarnation and Birth of Christ we find dogma providing two psychologically distinguishable motives or types of motivation, one in which the motive power or driving force is derived from a conscious or reflective appeal to our reason or rational will, the other in which the driving force is derived from an appeal, often not consciously recognized or adverted to by us, to the parental, protective, and sympathetic impulses of our instinctive or quasi-instinctive nature. The two types of motivation blend and mutually reinforce each other, and so tie us to Our Lord with their twined strands, and urge us to love both God and man the more deeply. Parenthetically, may we not add, that if the Divine Educator *par excellence*, through his dogmatic revelation, utilizes and builds upon human instinctive driving forces, should we have any hesitation in doing so in our halting technic for soul-training and religious education?

The great dogmas of the future life are at the same time an appeal to the rational will on the ground of prudence and enlightened self-interest and an appeal to the instinctive craving for well-being, self-preservation, and happiness. The dogma of creation is the rational basis of the motive of duty, while the related dogmas of divine omnipresence and omniscience build upon and turn to supernatural purposes the natural, and apparently instinctive, human craving for approval and shrinking from disapproval. And so one could run

through the whole of Catholic doctrinal teaching and multiply illustrations evidencing the fact that dogmas furnish a motive power, a driving force, a dynamic motivation, which impels us to live up faithfully to our Catholic ideal of life.

Dogmas, then, provide the supernatural motivation of conduct. Such motivation, moreover, appears to be of at least three types, which we may call for convenience, and without pressing the technical psychological meaning of the terms, rational, imaginative, and instinctive. The rational or reflective motivation of self-interest is provided by such dogmas as immortality, judgment, heaven, and hell; that of duty by the dogmas of God and creation especially; that of gratitude by such dogmas as those of Providence, the Incarnation, and Redemption; that of love particularly by the dogmas of the divine Fatherhood, the brotherhood of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity. Imaginative motivation is exemplified in the ideal of Mary, Virgin and Mother. Instinctive motivation is illustrated in all of the above examples of dogmas that touch off and stimulate and sublimate either instinctive forces and impulses within us or else those instinct-habit consolidations and acquired tendencies which are genetically related to or which closely resemble instinctive forces proper.

Dogmas mould theoretic ethical codes. A man's ethical standards are almost inevitably influenced by his religious faith or his philosophy of life. The Protestant Reformation, for instance, produced profound changes in the thitherto prevailing ethics of the family and property. The philosophy of modern socialism or rationalism has induced even more radical changes. What one

believes will ultimately and in the long run determine the concrete principles and tenets of his moral code. This is the intellectualistic dynamic nexus between dogma and morality. But not less dynamic is the vol-untaristic or affective and volitional tie between the two. An agnostic or atheist must fall back upon the purely humanistic motives of conduct. A Catholic has these and the supernatural motives to boot. Furthermore, the humanistic driving forces are integrated, sublimated, reinforced, and strengthened by the Catholic super-natural motives derived from dogmas.

We may now sum up in one sentence what has been a rather tedious even if unavoidable discussion. As moral teaching provides the *ideal* of conduct, so prayer and the sacraments provide the *means* of grace that help us to attain that ideal, while dogmas proper provide the *motives* that urge and impel us to live out the same ideal.

What then is the bearing of this conclusion on the dogmatic content of the religion course? If the edu-cative function of dogmatic truths, understood in their broader sense, is to provide the supernatural helps and motives of conduct, may we not make the inference that the primary aim of dogmatic instruction should be to reinforce and enhance the motivating power of beliefs and to direct the student in the most fruitful use of the supernatural means of help from God. It is in accord-ance with this general principle that content and method of presentation should be determined. The following paragraphs contain some scattered suggestions along this line.

1. The major stress should be put upon the great cen-tral motivating Catholic dogmas, and the minor dog-

mas should be grouped with this end in view. Take, for instance, the dogmatic cycle or cluster relating to the Redemption. We have therein the simple nuclear heart of the dogma, namely, that God so loved us as to become man and die for us. The rudest mind realizes that greater love hath no man for another than that he lay down his life for his friend. Secondly, the nuclear truth is explained and enriched in content and vividness by the organically related truths concerning original sin and the fall, actual sin, the preparation for and birth of the Savior, the life and personality of Christ, the circumstances of His passion and death. With apologies to the etymologists, may we call these the peri-nuclear dogmas? Thirdly, theology discusses in connection with the Incarnation and Redemption certain questions regarding the hypostatic union; such, for instance, as that of the two wills in Christ,—questions around which revolved so many of the Christological heresies of the early and later centuries. Such truths we may call protective or defensive dogmas.

Thus, just as the biological cell is built up of the nucleus, the surrounding cell-substance, and the protective cell-wall, so many dogmatic cycles have three aspects—the nuclear, the sustaining peri-nuclear, and the defensive or protective.

In our dogmatic instruction the greater emphasis should be put upon the nuclear truth and its peri-nuclear explanation and content. There would be little if any educative value in explaining, for instance, many of the early heresies regarding the hypostatic union. The conciliar definitions that vanquished most of these early heresies were measures of defence which the Church took with reluctance and as a last resort to parry attacks

30 THE CONTENT OF ADVANCED RELIGION COURSE

that would eventually have struck a deadly blow at the very heart of the nuclear dogmas themselves.

Again, as regards the "peri-nuclear" explanation of the dogma, technical dogmatic theology, on which our advanced religion textbooks are pretty closely modeled, gives little attention, say, to the circumstances of the birth and passion in treating of the Incarnation and Redemption. Yet these circumstances are of paramount motivating value, as we have seen. In general, the explanation of the Incarnation and Redemption should be modeled much more closely upon the Gospel account than, as at present, upon the standard textbooks of dogmatic theology.

Technical theology says little explicitly about the Fatherhood of God, a great central motivating dogma. The subject does not permit perhaps of technical intellectualistic treatment. Likewise, most of our advanced religion textbooks, while covering in detail the attributes of God, scarcely if at all mention His Fatherhood. What a contrast to our Lord's dogmatic pedagogy!

2. Definitions are not the be-all and end-all of dogmatic instruction. As we have seen in discussing the dogmas regarding the Blessed Virgin, the imaginative or impressionistic ideal is active as a motive, even where the exact nuances of dogmatic definition cannot be distinguished with theological precision. This is no brief for vagueness or impressionism in teaching, but is rather a word of encouragement to those who fret because the exact definitions learned today in class will be forgotten soon after—if not long before—the boy or girl has graduated from high school or college.

Scientific theology must exist to analyze, define, systematize, and correlate dogmatic truths. There must be

definitions somewhere—definitions clearly set forth in strict theological terminology, definitions known and firmly grasped by technical theologians, definitions embodied and safeguarded in the official literary sources of Catholic tradition. But is an absolutely exact theological and technical knowledge and retention in memory of many such definitions a necessity for the lay Catholic man or woman? If so, the early Christians must have been seriously handicapped, for we know how few definitions beyond those in the Creeds were part and parcel of their religious education. If so, many a simple soul in our American parishes would have scant chances of entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is not always the intellectual precision of thought so much as the vivid and vital effective grasp of the nuclear and peri-nuclear truths that gives the real dogmatic motive for conduct. The important aim in our Catholic dogmatic teaching is not to turn out amateur theologians who can repeat every definition in the advanced religion textbook; nor to turn out amateur apologists who can answer every question non-Catholic inquirers can put; but to turn out boys and girls who have gotten the habit of making doctrinal truths the vital motives for loving God and their neighbor.

3. In dogmatic instruction, some account should be taken of age and sex interests, instincts, and trends of the students. In the advanced religion course, for instance, less attention need ordinarily be paid to Baptism and Confirmation, as most of the students will already have received these sacraments. On the other hand, the sacrament of matrimony should be treated with considerable fullness, as should also such kindred subjects as choice of mate, courtship, conventions and liberties,

impediments, practical procedure for arranging with the pastor for a wedding, and, if time permits, something on the care and education of children.

Again, in dealing with boys of early adolescence—of the “gang age”—should we stress the passive life and virtues of Christ culminating in His passion and death, or should we stress the active aggressive life and virtues of Christ culminating in the triumph of His Resurrection? The writer would incline to the latter alternative. In teaching girls, perhaps the former is the better method.

4. The treatment of dogmatic truths should emphasize the higher motives of conduct. On the one hand, these higher motives of duty, gratitude, and love are usually attainable in greater or lesser degree by the average lay Catholic, at least as combining with or tingeing the lower motives of self-interest. On the other hand, there is no little danger that our boys and girls, if content with the lower motives will fall even below the required level of attrition or imperfect love. And if they fall below this level, even good faith and ignorance are of no avail. In the surveys referred to on a preceding page, 422 college students were asked to answer the following question: “Is the disposition represented in the following statement sufficient for Confession: ‘If there were no heaven and no hell, I wouldn’t bother my head about God’s commands, although since heaven and hell exist I repent’?” While the question is slightly open to misinterpretation, the results of the surprise test were disturbing, not to say alarming. Of the 422 students, 262 or 62.1 per cent answered correctly; 14 or 3.3 per cent were hazy; 146 or 34.6 per cent answered incorrectly.

5. Into dogmatic instruction should be frequently

and inconspicuously interwoven the moral implications and applications of the dogma under consideration. A similar point was stressed in the preceding chapter and need hardly be gone over again. A paragraph labeled "Practice" or "Application" tacked on to the end of the dogmatic chapter is too obvious, not to say irritating or nugatory. The moral implication or application should tie naturally into the body of the chapter and should grow organically out of the current treatment of the topic. A "Let us resolve" at the end of the lesson or chapter makes a somewhat dull appeal to the adolescent mind and will.

In concluding, the following outline is suggested tentatively for the dogmatic section of the advanced religion course:

- a. Perfect and imperfect love of God.
- b. Immortality of soul. Judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory. (Motive of self-interest, hope, prudence.)
- c. God our Creator and Father. Providence. Trinity. Angels. (Chief motives, duty and love.)
- d. Fall, Incarnation, and Redemption. Mary, Virgin and Mother. (Chief motive, gratitude.)
- e. Review of dogmas as giving motives of self-interest, duty, gratitude, love, and so forth.
- f. Grace, sanctifying and actual.
- g. Prayer. Communion of Saints.
- h. Sacraments; in general; in particular, especially Penance, Communion, and Matrimony. Indulgences. Sacramentals.
- i. Mass and liturgy thereof.
- j. Review of means and helps given us through prayer, sacraments, and Mass to uplift and strengthen our motives for fidelity to love of God and neighbor.
- k. Faith, its intellectual and volitional effects upon conduct; its birth, growth, and preservation in the individual life.

THE HISTORICAL CONTENT

"Life contains no information!" In our grim seeking after humor if haply we may find it, we may from time to time come across this proud boast blazoned forth on the promotion page of the much-read weekly of the name. How would it do to carve some similar inscription over the portals of our educational institutions? Facts, facts, facts; of the formidable collection of them which we tuck neatly into the brain-cases of our juvenile patients by the familiar trepanning and other neolithic processes, how many are worth knowing, and how many should instead, after proper embalming and shrouding, have been decently buried within the pages of an "Encyclopedia of Useless Information"?

In order to help kindle and keep alight the religious fires, the religion course must beg, borrow or steal a goodly supply of the products of the mines of Christian history. The factual and informational output of these mines is well-nigh limitless. The religion course must therefore beg, borrow, or steal discreetly. It must select. What, then, should it leave, and what should it take? The following paragraphs are an attempt at a provisional and partial answer to this question. The suggestions to be made are based on a decade or more of classroom experiment by the writer.

1. Most textbooks of American history treat mainly of the history of American political life and institutions rather than of the history of integral American life. Man, including the American species, is a political animal, but is much more besides. History should be interested in cabbages as well as in kings. Most, if not all,

our commonly used textbooks of Church history treat mainly of the career of the Catholic Church as a world-wide organization rather than of the career of the Catholic Church as the sanctifier of humanity. They are concerned mostly with what we might call the external, public, dynastic, political, or international life of the Church. They scamp most other phases of her life.

After all, is not the history of Christianity the history of the Kingdom of God among men, the narrative of the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian commonwealth and in the lives of the Christian multitudes? The Church is the mystical body of Christ, and her history is the record of the energizing of the spirit of Christ through His Mystical body. Her history is, in other words, the record of the influence and changes wrought in the hearts and ways of men by the grace of God. Every human relation and every human institution has felt the shock and impact of this mighty supernatural force.

The spirit and works of charity, the family and home, chastity, property, free and slave labor, recreation, human life and health, civic and international relations, religious and political liberty, knowledge and education, science and the arts, morality and religion—all these primary human pursuits and interests and institutions have undergone profound changes because a Babe was born to us in Bethlehem. All should receive due attention in our textbooks of Church history. Christian history, therefore, that confines its attention to external dynastic things comes very near being the play without the prince. Do our current textbooks of Church history measure up? Some of them, it is true, make a feeble concession to the view advocated by devoting a chapter

or two to *some* phases of Christian influence as exercised during *one* period, the later Middle Ages. But why should one period be singled out, and why should the emphasis even here be confined chiefly to certain limited fields such as that of the arts and sciences and education?

Should not *all* phases of Catholic life be set forth and be set forth for *all* periods? Moreover, the now neglected phases are often just the ones that are closer to the daily life and interests of the boy and girl and that can most easily be presented in textbooks and classroom instruction in a manner that holds attention. The Church history course is, we all recognize, already overcrowded. The simplest solution is: Make room for a more adequate and balanced treatment by crowding out some of the less important present content.

The foregoing view is proposed a bit dogmatically, perhaps. The writer desires, however, merely to offer it for discussion. It, in addition, seems to concern the history course rather than the advanced religion course. Its bearing on the latter will be dealt with in the latter part of the present chapter.

2. Church history should bring out in bold relief what Christianity has done and is doing for the sons of men. It should answer the question: What has Christianity contributed to the temporal as well as to the eternal welfare of the human race? What, for example, has she contributed to the promotion of charity and the works of mercy, to the stability and sanctity and happiness of the home, to respect for human life, to industrial justice and economic freedom, and so forth?

The modern American mind asks of any institution, human or divine, not, What are you? or, What do you teach? but, What have you done or left undone? Nor

is the American mind singular in this. The Orient is today challenging the Christian missionary from the Occident on the same issue. And even on the primitive cultural levels,

By all ye will or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your God and you.

"By their fruits you shall know them."

What have been the "fruits" of Christianity? What has it done and what is it doing for humanity? What has it done and what is it doing for you and me, for us of today? History that answers these questions in the concrete fulfils one of its essential tasks. But it does more. It fans and feeds the fires of loyalty in our students. For loyalty is the child of gratitude. It arises out of the recognition of service rendered.

3. Contemporary church history should receive a very large share, and perhaps the lion's share, of attention. Is it good pedagogy to recount in detail the efforts of the medieval Church to lessen warfare among men by means of the Peace of God and Truce of God, and at the same time to overlook our recent Catholic labors for the establishment of international peace and amity? Is it not poor policy to laud the medieval guilds to the skies while we pass over in silence the great Catholic social and industrial movements that are now under way on both sides of the Atlantic?

We are the children of our times. The thirteenth was a great century, but we are living in the third decade of the twentieth. And we judge institutions less by what they have done or left undone in the past than by what they are actually doing or leaving undone in the present.

Moreover, we of America have not a highly developed historical sense and interest. Our students live in the present and their interest is keenest in contemporary events. By way of illustration, the writer may mention that, while questions concerning present-day religious liberty in its various aspects are frequently brought up by students in his classes, he has never yet received a single inquiry or question in reference to the Inquisition. That is, in the language of the campus, "ancient history" or "old stuff." Not that American boys and girls have no interest at all in the past. Under skilful guidance a whole class can often be aroused to a keen interest in past history if the teacher is deft at clothing the dead bones of the past in fleshly garments and at making the men of yore walk the earth again in their habits as they lived. But the interest in contemporary events is certainly more spontaneous and, other things being equal, more keen and alert.

4. The failures of Christianity should be honestly and frankly faced. Over against the success of Christianity, for instance, in largely stamping out divorce and suicide, we have to chalk up its comparative failure to meet the challenge of international warfare.

It is not sufficient to say that the fault lies with humanity for not trying the Christian solution. The fact of the relative failure stubbornly remains. And it is neither honesty nor good policy to evade the fact simply because it is unpleasant. We may, however, quite legitimately recall and emphasize the general idea that Christianity is like an athletic coach and at that like a coach who cannot select and choose his raw material. Credit and blame are due the coach, not in proportion to the gross tally of victories and defeats for the

season, but in proportion to the net improvement or lack of improvement made by him in the raw material placed in his hands.

Moreover, it is good educational policy to drive home to our students that, although the Christian generations that have gone before us have accomplished much towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, much still remains for us of to-day to do and to contribute. We of the twentieth century team must play our parts to win.

5. In order to bring out in higher relief the beneficent action of Christianity upon mankind, a certain amount of illustrative material may well be taken from pre-Christian and pagan sources. For instance, the Christian concept of the sacredness of human life can be emphasized by contrasting it with the ruthlessness towards the newly-born often shown in precept and practice by the most humane and high-principled pagan moralists of Greece and Rome or by some of our own barbarian ancestors or by many present-day non-Christian peoples, civilized and uncivilized. Catholic condemnation of superstitions can well be illustrated by the loose tolerance among many non-Christian peoples of superstitions that gravely harm human welfare.

The foregoing paragraphs outline the historical material which in the writer's view should be brought before our students in Catholic high schools and colleges. The further question now arises: Where and how should this historical material be presented?

Naturally, the Church history course should do its part. It is not doing it now. Since it is not doing its part, the burden devolves upon the religion course. Even were the history course doing its part, the burden should

perhaps be shared between the two courses. At any rate there should be close correlation.

We are, however, here concerned with the part to be taken under existing conditions by the advanced religion course. Two methods of presentation therein are open. The writer has used both.

One method is to combine moral and historical content in the same year. For example, when treating of the moral obligation of care of the sick, treat also of the work done by Christianity for the relief of illness; or when treating of the duty of chastity, treat also in connection therewith of the historic labors of the Church in the cause of purity. Each sub-heading of the year would thus be given both moral and historical exposition.

The alternative method is to devote a whole year, preferably the third or fourth year, of the four-year course to the historical treatment of the effects of Christianity upon humankind. If given in the third or fourth year, this historical course can be made to serve incidentally as a review of the moral course previously given in the first or second year. The historical treatment should follow the same topical order that was followed in the moral course.

As implied throughout this paper, the topical rather than the chronological exposition of Christian history is suggested, at least for the exposition given in the advanced religion course.

The writer, moreover, feels strongly that it is better pedagogy to treat each topic in reverse chronological order. Begin with the present and work back. Begin also with the near-at-hand and work out. For example, if we are dealing with Christian care of the sick, we could of course begin with the care of the sick among

the Jews and pagans, and from this starting point gradually work up through the centuries to the present. But is it not better to begin with present-day facts that are near to us, and work outwards and backwards? Start with the works of mercy for the sick that are being carried on to-day in our own parish, community, diocese, or country. Call attention first to such work under Catholic auspices, then to such work under state and non-Catholic auspices. Next, rapidly review the work of other countries and of the whole world. Finally, trace back our contemporary hospital, nursing, sanitary, and research work through the modern, medieval, and Greco-Roman periods of Christian history to its source in the teaching and example of Christ. Incidentally touch upon non-Christian care of the sick by way of contrast.

One further suggestion may be made in passing. Is it not worth while, either at the beginning of or during the historical course, to ask the students to write papers on some such topics as the following: What has your Catholic religion done for you? In what ways has it helped you to be better? How has Christianity helped to satisfy your needs in life and to protect your rights? What are Catholics accomplishing in your parish, community, diocese, or country? The pedagogical purpose and value of such papers is obvious enough.

The final question that arises is that of sources. The sources for information to which we should first apply, the easily accessible Church histories, contain the historical data desired in very homeopathic doses. We have, however, in English some readily available source material in a great many articles in the Catholic Encyclopedia. For the convenience of those readers who may be interested we offer the following outline of a course

with some of the more important pertinent Catholic Encyclopedia articles given in quotes after each topic:

a. Religion.—"Paganism," "Religion," "Monotheism," "Animism," "Fetishism," "Totemism," "Naturism," "Witchcraft."

b. Charity.—"Poor," "Poverty and Pauperism," "Alms and Almsgiving," "Charity and Charities," "Hospitals," "Insane," "Orphans," "Education of Blind," "Education of Deaf," "Leprosy," "Montes Pietatis."

c. Family and home.—"Family," "Divorce," "Woman," "Illegitimacy."

d. Property, labor.—"Labor," "Guilds," "Slavery," "Popular Action" (in Supplement).

e. Human life and health.—"Duels," "Infanticide," "Suicide."

f. Civic and international relations.—"Law, Civil, Influence of the Church On," "Papal Arbitration," "Truce of God," "Prisons," "Ordeals," "Democracy."

g. Religious liberty.—"Toleration, History of," "Inquisition."

h. Knowledge.—"Libraries," "Manuscripts," "Medicine," "Astronomy," "Geography," "Anatomy," "Physics," etc.

i. Education.—"Education," "Schools," "Colleges," "Universities," "Monasticism."

j. Arts.—"Sculpture," "Painting," "Ecclesiastical Art," "Gothic," "Byzantine," "Miracle Plays," "Moralities," etc.

The Reading Lists and Index of the Encyclopedia will furnish references to a much larger number of articles on the foregoing main subjects. A great deal of usable information can be gotten from the many works of Dr. James J. Walsh and from the very remarkable little work entitled "Key to the World's Progress," by Charles S. Devas. Among elementary works from non-Catholic sources may be mentioned Uhlhorn's "Conflict of Chris-

tianity with Heathenism," Karl Schmidt's "Social Results of Early Christianity," and Brace's "Gesta Christi." While all three of these were written several decades ago, there is a great amount of factual content in them that can be used for illustration.

For current Catholic work in various fields, the Catholic weekly papers and Catholic periodicals furnish abundant source material. Special attention may also be called to the recently published directories of American Catholic charities and of American Catholic schools, as well as to the official Catholic directory of the United States and Canada which is published annually.

The foregoing list of sources is very rudimentary and popular. An adequate bibliography would run into several hundred titles. The list given will, however, serve as a sufficient introduction for those who may not be familiar with the field. Meanwhile may we not hope that some public-minded professional Catholic historian will soon write us a history of integral Catholic life?

THE APOLOGETIC CONTENT

Do you think you could write offhand a 500-word essay on the Gnostics or Arians, on the Manichaeans or their medieval representatives, the Cathari? How bloodless, lifeless, remote and curious appear to us these old theological saurians. Yet they were the "modern thinkers," the emancipated progressives of their day. Nor were they puny parlor bolshevists. They stalked the earth like giants and bestrode the Christian world like a Colossus. And they were as nimble-witted and resourceful as they were huge. If the rock of Catholicism withstood their repeated attempts at mining, no little of the credit was, under divine grace, due to the equally resourceful measures of defence devised and put into execution by the alert Christian apologists of the time. But how strange seems to us of the twentieth century much even of the apologetic of those days.

The fact is, apologetics is a shifting discipline. It is the chameleon among the theological sciences, ever changing color to match the kaleidoscopic changes on the screen of human thought and human error. With each new era the zeitgeist takes on new forms, and apologetics adopts new content and new methods accordingly. During the last four hundred years apologetics has made two major shifts, one on the outbreak of Protestantism, and the other at the dawn of modern rationalism. Today it is seemingly called upon to make a third, as nineteenth century rationalism rapidly evolves into what we may call post-rationalism.

The apologetic literature of the last few generations has devoted its attention mainly to the four great ques-

tions of the immortality of the soul, the existence of a personal God, the deity of Christ, and the divine foundation of the Church. All four questions are still keenly discussed, although perhaps there is a considerably greater need than existed a half-century ago to take account of the good intentions but rickety faith of those who pray: "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!"

Other important questions are, however, rapidly forging their way to the front and demanding the attention of the apologist, particularly here in our own America. These questions raised by the post-rationalists are not always the outgrowth of rationalistic doubt alone. They seem to take their rise from the pragmatic attitude and social sense of twentieth-century America.

Our typical American philosophic pragmatism at one end of the scale and our typical contemporary slang and colloquialisms at the other are equally symptomatic. That is true which works, the pragmatist tells us. The man in the street expresses himself more picturesquely perhaps, but in similar vein. "Go get 'em," "make good," "produce the goods," "put it across," "get results," "some action"—need we multiply the popular phrases one hears daily? The intellectual worker, the Pullman smoker philosopher, and the man in the street are all judging us by one standard, the pragmatic. They are weighing, not our faith or our profession, but our works. They are asking us two questions: What is the use of all your theological impedimenta which you call dogmas? What concrete betterment are you Catholics bringing about in human happiness and human life and activities?

The contemporary social conscience, such as it is,

hatches another brood of questions. Is the Christian moral code in general and the Catholic moral code in particular the last word in morality? Does it make for maximum human well-being, for maximum human happiness and welfare? Is, for instance, the Christian moral theory of property and labor just? Is Catholic teaching on the family, divorce, and birth-control defensible? Is Catholic charity coddling the unfit and the wastrel at the expense of the fit and the worth while? From the ranks of the eugenists, for example, one hears feeble voices faintly suggesting that perhaps our whole traditional concept of the sacredness and inviolability of human life calls for radical revision—nor are such voices heard in non-Catholic circles only! Will these voices grow weaker and be hushed, or will they gather volume as the century rolls on? There are many sinister indications that they will more likely become stronger and more articulate. In a word, may it not be that the apologetic of the last three-quarters of the twentieth century must be largely an apologetic of Catholic moral teaching?

Controversies on concrete dogmas are already receding into the background. Could you, for instance, get many present-day non-Catholics very much excited over doctrines of grace or good works? Controversy has for many years been converging more and more on the four fundamental beliefs concerning the soul, God, Christ, and the Church, with a growing emphasis on the first two. Today it is seemingly passing over into the field of moral concepts and principles. Newspaper publicity has thus far centered more on such matters as the living wage and birth control—for fairly obvious reasons. But the moral code of Christianity is being increasingly

challenged all along the line. The apologist must fare forth into new fields.

Our advanced religion students are going out into a world of thought and action surcharged with beliefs, theories, attitudes, and principles crudely or subtly dangerous to their own God-given faith. Our primary aim in including apologetic material in the religion course is to preserve, buttress, and strengthen the faith of our students. A secondary aim is to equip them for defending their faith against attacks from all quarters and for giving a reasonable account of it to fair-minded but puzzled questioners. The apologetic content therefore of the advanced religion course should include a treatment of the questions most mooted in American circles, the great questions we have outlined above.

These great questions may be summed up as follows: What are the reasons for the faith that is in us regarding the Church, Christ, God, and our souls? What has the Catholic Church done and what is she doing for the promotion of human well-being? What purpose do her dogmas serve in the attainment of this end? Does the Catholic moral code square with and make for human welfare?

So far as the last three questions are concerned, the answers thereto should, it seems to the writer, be given currently in those sections of the religion course that deal with moral, dogma, and history. While, for instance, explaining the Catholic doctrine of truthfulness, explain how truth-telling contributes to human welfare by maintaining the mutual confidence necessary for social relations. While treating of the Marian dogmas, treat of their motivating force in Catholic lives. The historical content should lay particular emphasis on what

Christianity has done for humankind. Most of the foregoing questions relating to the apologetic of moral, dogma, and history have been dealt with sufficiently in the preceding chapters, to which the reader is referred for more details. We may therefore pass on to the consideration of apologetic material relating to the Church, Christ, God, and the human soul.

Our advanced textbooks in religion usually follow the logical order in treating these questions. They begin with the soul, and then take up successively the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, and the divine mission of the Church. Is this the best pedagogical order? May not the reverse order be preferable for textbook and classroom? The following manner of presentation is suggested as a basis of discussion. It is the method that has been used for some years by the instructors in religion at the Catholic University, and has, we believe, been fairly well tested experimentally.

Begin with a bird's-eye view of the Catholic Church as a living, energizing, active organism in our contemporary civilization. Review rapidly her sheer magnitude, as well as her international, inter-racial, and inter-class texture. Next take up her unique unity and her intense religious, moral, educational, charitable, and missionary activities. Passing on to the subject of her essential spirit and characteristics, treat of her flexibility and adaptability under varying conditions and environments, as contrasted with her unswerving loyalty to faith and principle. Her perennial youthfulness and vitality, her power of repair and ability to "come back," and her longevity should also be emphasized. In all the foregoing, the superhuman and superhistorical elements in the life of the Church should be made to stand out in

clear relief. To complete the picture of the contemporary Catholic organism, something can well be said of the miraculous or supernatural in her contemporary life and of the remarkable parallel between her life and spirit and the life and spirit of Christ.

After thus presenting the living Church as a going organization with unique, transcendent, superhuman, supernatural, and Christlike elements in her life, outline the traditional early apostolic and biblical proofs of the foundation of the Church. The structure and functions of the Church may then be taken up.

An approach to the treatment of the divinity of Christ may be made from the historical side. Review what the name and person of Christ mean in the affections and loyalty of one-third of the human race today and in the life and ideals of the greater part of modern civilization. Outline in a lecture or two the great historic changes wrought in humanity by the teaching and life of Christ. Give another lecture to the general and prophetic preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Such treatment presents the Founder of Christianity as the central figure and supreme commanding personality of human history. Working back from this great historic fact, study then the claims of Christ as established by His teaching, His character, His works, and His miracles.

Before dealing with the philosophical grounds of belief in God as growing out of our concepts of causality and of law and order in the universe, it would seem a better policy to call attention first to some of the wonders of the universe about us, the universe of matter, of life, of consciousness, and of intelligence, laying emphasis at the same time on the unbridged chasms that yawn

at the great dividing lines between nothingness, matter-energy, life, consciousness, rational intelligence, and free will.

Finally, so far as the treatment of immortality is concerned, start with the study of man himself, with the essential unity and equality of civilized and uncivilized man as contrasted sharply with the lack of reason, of language, of religion, and of free will in even the most highly developed brute animal. The psychological and moral arguments for immortality may then be developed.

The foregoing presentation of the apologetic content follows the general pedagogical principle that we should begin with concrete, near, obvious facts, and work from these back to the interpretation of the facts. Such a presentation, moreover, enables us to break in on what might otherwise be too complicated and tedious a presentation of argumentative material. The argumentative in such a plan alternates with the descriptive.

The writer feels very strongly that it is not well to mass and accumulate apologetic arguments too much. Students tire of elaborate proofs and are often handicapped by lack of previous training in following long-sustained chains of reasoning.

In addition it seems more advisable not to draw attention too explicitly to controversy. Ghosts may be raised as well as lain by such a procedure. Apologetic material should, so far as possible, be given currently, incidentally, inconspicuously. It should be welded on and tied into the rest of the instruction rather than isolated. It is not easy, all will admit, to meet this need either in a textbook or in class work, but the ex-

perienced and tactful teacher can usually handle the situation successfully.

In a recently published course in religion for college students a great deal of space is given to the statement of and answer to objections. The questions raised are explicitly referred to as "objections" and are treated as such in the most formal manner. We are very dubious regarding the value of such a method. Is it not better to avoid entirely the word "objection" and never to advance objections as such, but rather to present the constructive facts that give the answer to such difficulties?

To sum up, therefore, it seems that the apologetic content of the advanced religion course should cover not only the traditional apologetic material but also should, in view of contemporary American demands, deal with the apologetic of dogma, moral, and history. The apologetic of dogma, moral, and history can best be woven into the current treatment of the subjects as they occur in the four-year course. The traditional apologetic regarding the human soul, the existence of God, the deity of Christ, and the divine foundation of the Church is *perhaps* best given in a separate full-year course. The outline of such a full-year course is given on a previous page, so it does not seem necessary to present a more definite schema of treatment such as has been given in the preceding chapters.

THE ASCETIC CONTENT

No apology is needed for our use of the word ascetic in the above title. Asceticism is often wrongly confused with austerity or rigid self-mortification, or even with mysticism. We are, however, using the word ascetic in its traditional Catholic sense, namely, pertaining to the education of the soul in the love of God and neighbor. The Greek original from which our word is derived meant bodily exercise and especially athletic training. Asceticism is, therefore, the system of spiritual athletics through which the soul is coached and trained to win the game of eternal life. Our ascetic theology is our Catholic science and art of character-building and soul-training, our technic of moral and religious pedagogy.

Ascetic theology has almost entirely passed out of the curriculum of our seminaries. Although the essential task of the priesthood is the building of character and the training of souls for the commonwealth of man and the commonwealth of God, nevertheless the study of the technic of the primary sacerdotal task has been almost entirely eliminated from the seminary curriculum and left to common sense and the stray bits of ascetic lore gathered during retreats and other spiritual exercises. There is no room in the curriculum! Let us hope that the day will soon dawn when ascetic theology, the art and science of moral and religious education, will be taken seriously and admitted into seminary circles on equal footing with its sister sciences, dogmatic and moral theology. That, however, is a question that does not concern us so much here.

What does concern us is the fact that advanced re-

ligious instruction, modeled closely as it is after seminary curricula, has like the seminary curriculum, neglected the field of ascetic teaching. It will perhaps be at once said that such ascetic coaching is already part of our advanced religion courses as it is of the elementary and primary courses. In one sense, it is. There is no doubt that many practical ascetic suggestions are given to our children both in our textbooks and by our teachers. But so far at least as textbooks are concerned, the suggestions are of a limited type.

Our textbooks, for instance, frequently recommend prayer and the sacraments, call attention to the various popular devotions and easily gained indulgences, warn against evil companionship, or describe the methods of thought-control. These and many other all-important and fundamental coaching rules are usually given generous space. They well deserve all the space we give them. But are there not also many other coaching rules that we can offer to our advanced religion students that will help them make good and win out in the game of Catholic living?

Incidentally, most of our advanced religion students will marry soon after leaving college or high school, and whatever insight into the educative process and its concrete practical principles and methods we can give them will be of very real use to them in their future tasks as parental educators, as fathers and mothers. In fact, may we not look forward to the day when soulcraft will be recognized as an independent course or in some other adequate manner in the high-school and college curriculum. At present we train our students for business and trade and the professions and what not, and we give them never an hour of preparation for the conse-

crated business and trade and profession of guiding and coaching the souls that will be entrusted to them as future parents by the Heavenly Father of us all. The curriculum is too crowded! But that again is another question.

The following paragraphs make no attempt to outline systematically the science of Catholic asceticism. They merely contain some random suggestions from the field that may with profit, the writer believes, be brought to the attention of our high-school and college boys and girls through textbooks and oral instruction. The suggestions may for convenience be grouped under three headings: the technic of habit-formation, the use of natural means from supernatural motives, and the use of natural motives themselves.

1. Our ascetic literature teems with valuable suggestions on habit-formation. Some of the more important of these have been vividly set forth in English by William James, in his brilliant chapter on "Habit." He outlines the key rules of habit-formation as follows: "In the acquisition of a new habit, or the leaving off of an old one, we must take care to launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible." "Never suffer an exception to occur till the new habit is securely rooted in your life." "Seize the very first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make, and on every emotional prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain." "Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day." Readers who may not have read the whole passage from James or whose memory is a little blurred regarding it may find many worth-while practical points therein that are well adapted to class-room exposition.

Some other concrete suggestions along the same line may be the following, chosen from those which are no doubt familiar to teachers of religion, but which do not often receive treatment in religion courses.

Concentrate effort on dislodging the king log. Each of us has some pet fault or dominant moral need. Concentrate and select. Neglect, relatively speaking, other faults or other needs, and devote the bulk of effort to the correction of your pet fault or the acquisition of your dominant spiritual need. Don't dissipate energy over too wide a field. First determine what your pet fault or supreme need is, and keep on its trail like a bloodhound. One thing at a time.

Win out on the first test. A resolution once made—for example, to say morning prayers regularly or to avoid profanity—will perhaps be broken unconsciously within twenty-four hours. Don't trouble about such an unreflecting breach. But within a short time will come the occasion when you clearly and consciously know you are on the point of kicking over the traces again. You may for a moment waver. *This* is the first real test of your pledge. *This* is the crucial test. Make good on this first trial of strength, and success will give confidence and exhilaration for the next and the next until the habit becomes set.

As a rule, put a time limit on your resolutions. Make your resolution for the next week or month. After you have carried it through for the week or month, renew it for the next. Marathon resolutions easily become winded.

Having once made a resolution, stick to it. Keep pegging away, notwithstanding occasional or more than occasional backsliding, until you finish the job. If you

succeed in acquiring one good habit in a year, you can chalk up the period as twelve months well spent.

Other elementary rules of habit-forming technic will no doubt occur to the reader. The point we desire to emphasize is that in religious teaching considerable attention ought to be given to such ascetic coaching. Our boys and girls should have at their finger tips the basic technic of the game. It is probably needless to add that such coaching should not be confined to any one section of a four-year course. It should be given currently and should be interwoven into every section and every subsection of the course. Such interweaving cannot be done readily and smoothly in a religion textbook. The coaching must be primarily done orally by the teacher. Of course, such oral instruction may be sterile and unproductive. What we need most urgently perhaps is the development of moral "projects" in connection with our advanced religion teaching. A consideration of this phase of the problem would, however, involve extensive treatment of the question of methods, whereas we are in these chapters concerning ourselves only with content.

2. "Why do we leave everything to the Holy Ghost?" said a teaching sister of long experience to the writer some time ago. When we recommend our students to pray regularly and earnestly or to frequent the sacraments, we are recommending the use of supernatural means from supernatural motives. We cannot recommend such means too much, of course. On the other hand, should we forget the natural means available?

When we are in good health, we are more apt to be kinder in thought and more charitable in our judgments. Habitual charity in thought and word is often closely related to habitual bodily well-being. When we are

under-normal physically or overtired or exhausted, we are more inclined to be testy and irritable. Into our minds may flood the unpleasantnesses of the past that tend to stir up the uncharity ever lurking in the depths of our souls. Such at least is very common experience. Again, many a man, otherwise devoted, hard-working, and high-principled, gets the reputation of being crabbed and sour and cross-grained and generally cantankerous, and richly deserves the reputation, when the real cause underlying his crabbedness is *avoidable* indigestion or insomnia. Late hours of retiring are frequently followed by a day of ill-temper. Physical exhaustion may readily lower normal resistant power to all kinds of temptation, or may be, for instance, a very real factor contributing to breach of chastity. The list could be easily lengthened.

We are men, not angels, and we are such by divine disposition. We have bodies that may carry us galloping on the road to the Kingdom of God, or may throw us into the ditch. Bodily conditions affect spiritual welfare for weal or woe in myriad ways. The best remedy for a bad temper may be the very simple one of eight hours sleep at night, less indigestible fodder, or more outdoor exercise. These are natural means to supernatural ends, but if the means are carried out from a supernatural motive, are not the means themselves supernaturalized? Let us emphasize the importance of the supernatural means like prayer and the sacraments, but is it not well to emphasize also the natural means for attaining supernatural ends, and in particular to emphasize the intimate bearing of physical conditions upon spiritual ones? Here too the friends of correlation may find a good opportunity for hitch-

ing up physical education with religious education, the athletics of the body with the athletics of the soul.

3. In our ascetic coaching, what use shall we make, not merely of natural *means*, but of natural as distinct from supernatural *motives*? It is generally agreed that supernatural virtues should build upon the natural virtues. But what is natural virtue? "Natural" can hardly refer to the content or object of the virtue in question. Is there any virtuous act that does not fall within the wide circle of love of God and man? St. Thomas in the *secunda secundae* of his "Summa Theologica" has given us an elaborate treatise on virtues from the supernatural standpoint. It would tax the ingenuity of the most ingenious to discover any variety of "natural" virtue not included in St. Thomas' exhaustive list of the Christian virtues. He even includes the habit of playing or taking recreation among the virtues, using for it the Greek name *eutrapelia*!

The difference between the natural and supernatural virtues is seemingly purely one of motive. If a good act is done for a supernatural motive, it pertains to the supernatural virtues; if for a natural motive it pertains to the natural virtues. In how far may or should we use and recommend natural motives in a religion course?

Were we speaking to a group of students on the importance of studying hard, we might make the appeal along the following lines: On the work you are doing today will depend your financial returns in your life work. Hard study is due your folks at home in decency and loyalty to them and in gratitude for their sacrifices for you. Making most out of school years is a primary duty to God Who reasonably expects from every man

fidelity to the duties of his actual state in life. Loafing is a sin.

Were we speaking to a group of girls on the question of liberties, we might suggest the following motives: The girl who easily allows liberties gets herself talked about in pretty crude language by the fellow and his gang. The average boy will in his heart thank and respect the girl who protects him against his own weakness, and it is the girl's part so to help and protect him in his fight for a clean life. High standards are expected from the Catholic girl because she is a Catholic: *noblesse oblige*. Lofty ideals of purity are God's will and are exemplified in the life of His Blessed Mother.

The two foregoing groups of appeals are examples of mixed natural and supernatural motives. Many Catholic educators reject and almost condemn natural motives on the score of efficacy. Judging the relative driving power of motives is, however, a delicate task. It is the writer's experience at least that natural motives often have enormous driving power when properly proposed, and with some types of personality under some circumstances have almost a monopoly of power. But waiving the question of relative driving power of the natural and supernatural motives, in how far should we make use of the former.

Certainly, in so far as natural motives have a force for good, and regardless for the time being of the question of supernatural merit, they may materially reduce the occasions of sin and the actual number of sins. This is quite worth while from the supernatural standpoint. We are commanded to avoid such occasions so far as possible, and no matter how far we reduce such occa-

sions, we shall still have a superabundance of temptations on which to exercise and build up spiritual muscles.

Moreover, where the supernatural motives have force, but perhaps not quite enough to assure results, is it not justifiable and even imperative to reinforce and strengthen them by natural appeals? This may not be the ultimate ideal, but it may serve as a temporary compromise until the supernatural motives get a better footing. Half a loaf is better than no bread at all.

Finally, is it not possible to interfuse the natural and supernatural motives, to utilize the natural appeals as more or less subordinated to the supernatural? After all, even though the supernatural motives may have arisen to the place of supremacy in our individual lives as a result of long training in the seminary and sacerdotal calling or in the novitiate and religious life, are not natural motives constantly intermingling with and jostling the supernatural motives in our lives? And while we may feel that even without the natural motives, we should still do our best from religious motives, is not this habitual disposition a result of a long process of fusion that has gone on silently and quietly during many years until the natural motives have been more or less absorbed into the supernatural?

The writer believes firmly for the foregoing reasons that we may and should make an appreciably greater use of the natural motives than we are doing in our religious education. Meanwhile, of course, we must not relax one iota of our insistence upon the supernatural motives and supernatural means of the religious life. If in the present chapter we have given the supernatural motives and means relatively brief space, our only

reason for doing so has been the well-recognized fact that they are already being amply emphasized in our religion courses.

One further point in conclusion. Is there any good reason why boys and girls of middle and later adolescence should not have a fairly good grasp of the fundamentals of character-training and soul-building? Would not such a knowledge help them in their own struggle for self-mastery and in their later parental tasks? Such an outline course in moral and religious education could be a part of some other present or future course in the curriculum, perhaps in the social or psychological or domestic science group, but inasmuch as such an outline course is not at present in the curriculum and does not seem to have very hopeful chances of being admitted thereto in the immediate future, might it not be possible to include such an outline in the religion courses?

This outline should deal with the following subjects: *Instincts* and their modification and expansion; their driving force; their potentialities of good and evil; their training through inhibition, substitution, and sublimation or alimentation; *ideals* of conduct, as admitted and as personally accepted; function of religion in defining and moulding ideals of conduct and in getting them admitted by the individual and collective conscience as well as in getting them personally accepted or adhered to in actual life; the rôle of dogmas in this educative process; the living ideal or *example*. The above suggestion is made tentatively. The outline need not and probably should not take up more than a month, that is, about three per cent, of a four years' course.



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